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SUBJECT: PAKISTAN MEDIA REACTION: OCTOBER 10, 2008

Summary: Reports and photographs on multiple bomb blasts in the country dominated front pages in all newspapers on Friday. Newspapers reported that "a suicide bomber rammed an explosive laden car into headquarters of the Anti-Terrorism Squad of police in Islamabad injuring eight policemen." Reports that "12 people were killed when a roadside bomb hit a prison van and a school bus in Upper Dir (NWFP)" also figured prominently. Also highlighted were reports that "U.S. drone attack claimed nine lives in Miramshah." Reports on the killing of "21 militants in Swat bombing" also received prominent coverage. Newspapers also quoted Assistant Secretary Boucher and Gen. David Petraeus acknowledging that the United States "was quite concerned about the situation in the settled areas of the NWFP." All newspapers also highlighted President Zardari's statement that "Pakistan will not go bankrupt due to the ongoing economic crisis." Newspapers also reported that the legislators "were unhappy over the scant security briefing" being given to them in an in-camera joint session of the two houses of parliament.

Newspapers continued to run editorials on the military briefing being given to the parliamentarians on the security situation in the country. The English daily, "Dawn," noted that "while it is certainly parliament's legal prerogative to summon state officials - uniformed or otherwise - to explain their conduct, the ongoing classified briefing is a very positive sign for democracy given the history of army supremacy over parliament." Another national English daily, "The News," observed that "many who now condemn the war against terrorists as one fought on behalf of the U.S. forget that the shadowy outfits that claim to speak in the name of religion, are largely the creation of Washington. U.S. interests - not religious zeal - was the prime motive behind their creation." The second-largest Urdu daily "Nawa-i-Waqt" noted that "the in-camera briefing would be useful only if it is aimed at formulating a policy to extricate the country from fighting a war of U.S. interests, otherwise this is a futile exercise." End Summary.

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News Stories  
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11. "Bomber Runs Down Anti-Terror Office In Islamabad" "The News" (10/10)

"At least eight people were injured when a suicide bomber rammed his explosive-laden vehicle into the central office of anti-terrorist squad (ATS) located in the premises of Police Headquarters, Islamabad on Thursday."

12. "Schoolgirls Among 12 Killed In Dir Bomb Blast" "Dawn" (10/10)

"Twelve people, four schoolgirls among them, were killed and 10 others injured when a roadside bomb hit a prison van and a school

bus in Upper Dir district on Thursday."

13. "'U.S. Drone Attack' Claims Nine Lives" "Dawn" (10/10)

"Two missiles fired by a suspected US drone hit a residential compound in Tapai area of North Waziristan on Thursday, killing at least nine people."

14. "21 Militants Dead In Swat Bombing" "Dawn" (10/10)

"Twenty-one militants and five civilians were killed in bombing by jet fighters and mortar shelling in various areas of Swat on Thursday."

15. "Settled Areas A Worry For U.S." "Dawn" (10/10)

"Two senior U.S. officials have warned that Al Qaeda has expanded its influence from the tribal belt to the settled areas of Pakistan, attacking targets inside the country's capital city. 'The threat Al Qaeda poses has materialized over the course of last year in a more challenging way into Pakistan itself,' said Gen David Petraeus who takes charge of the U.S. Central Command on Oct 31. At a separate briefing for Washington-based Pakistani journalists on Thursday, Assistant Secretary of State Richard Boucher acknowledged that the United States was 'quite concerned' about the situation in the settled areas of the NWFP."

16. "Boucher Reaffirms U.S. Commitment To Pakistan Security" "The News" (10/10)

"Noting the Pakistani nation's 'broad consensus' on curbing violent extremism, the United States top diplomat for South Asia on Thursday reaffirmed Washington's commitment to security and economic support for the elected government as it takes on 'enormous challenges' facing the country."

17. "Pakistan Won't Go Bankrupt" "Daily Times" (10/10)

"Pakistan will not go bankrupt due to the ongoing economic crisis, President Asif Ali Zardari said on Thursday."

18. "MPs Unhappy Over Scant Security Briefing" "The Nation" (10/10)

"Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani would take the Parliament into confidence on elements of Pak-U.S. cooperation in war on terror when the in-camera joint session resumes on Monday. Well-placed sources told 'The Nation' on Thursday that the Prime Minister had agreed to brief the joint sitting of the Parliament after the PML-N and other Opposition parties conveyed their dissatisfaction with what was said to be stereotyped briefing on security issues."

19. "No Consensus In Sight On Terror War Policy" "Dawn" (10/10)

"If the government aims at creating a national consensus on its strategy in the 'war on terror' through the joint session of parliament, it seems to have failed in its objective as all opposition groups have been expressing dissatisfaction with the briefing and the quality of answers to their questions."

110. "Government To Arrange 'Civilian' Briefing For MPs" "Daily Times" (10/10)

"The government has decided to arrange another closed-door briefing for parliamentarians on Monday by the Interior Adviser Rehman Malik after they conveyed their dissatisfaction to Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani over the in-camera briefing given by the army."

111. "Government Outlines Terrorism Strategy On Monday" "The News" (10/10)

"The government will announce on Monday its strategy to deal with extremism and terrorism down the road in the sake of the presentations made by the armed forces before the in-camera session of the Parliament. Federal Information and Broadcasting Minister Sherry Rehman will make the strategy public in the Parliament on behalf of the Federal Government."

112. "Ulema Open Their Heart To MPs On Terror" "The News" (10/10)

"Religious scholars belonging to all schools of thought on Thursday passionately appealed to the members of the Parliament that military operations in the tribal areas and Swat should be stopped forthwith and criminals, anti-state elements and foreign agents should be caught with the cooperation of local religious scholars and patriotic elders of respective areas and made example by being punished publicly."

¶13. "Involvement Of Jaish-e-Islami Suspected In Islamabad Attack" "The News" (10/10)

"Preliminary investigations into the Oct 9 Islamabad suicide attack, targeting the Anti-Terrorist Squad (ATS) headquarters, indicate the involvement of a Bajaur-based militant group, Jaish-e-Islami Pakistan (JIP)."

¶14. "Security Officials Find TTP Letter At Blast Site" "Daily Times" (10/10)

"Security officials found a letter from the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan at the Islamabad explosion site, signed by Commander Waliur Rehman on a Jaish-e-Islami letter pad. Written in Pashto language, the letter seeks permission from an undisclosed authority to launch an attack on the Anti-Terror Squad saying the plan of action had been finalized."

¶15. "FATA Operation To Continue Despite Growing Terrorism: Rehman Malik" "The Nation" (10/10)

"PM Advisor on interior Rehman Malik said that despite the growing terrorists' strikes across countries including suicide bombing, the ongoing operation in FATA would neither be halted nor abolished, while taking to a private TV."

¶16. "U.S. Special Forces And CIA Active In Western Pakistan" "Daily Times" (10/10)

"Special operations forces of the United States military and CIA operatives are now conducting regular secret incursions into western Pakistan, the Washington Post reported on Thursday."

¶17. "U.S. Warns Citizens Against Traveling To Pakistan" "Daily Times" (10/10)

"The United States has advised its nationals to avoid unnecessary travel to Pakistan due to security concerns, a statement issued by the U.S. State Department after Thursday's suicide blast in Islamabad, Aaj TV reported on Thursday."

¶18. "U.S. Ready To Make Peace With Taliban: Gates" "The News" (10/10)

"The United States would be prepared to reconcile with the Taliban if the Afghan government pursued talks to end the war, U.S. Defense Secretary Robert Gates said on Thursday."

¶19. "Relations Will Sour If The U.S. Does Not Release Dr. Aafia; We Can Go To The International Court Of justice: Pakistani Senators" "Nawa-i-Waqt" (10/10)

"The group of Pakistani Senators who have met Dr. Aafia Siddiqi has said that the U.S. is violating human rights, and U.S.-Pakistan relations will sour if it does not release Dr. Aafia immediately. On the other hand, Dr. Aafia has said that U.S. officials maltreated her during interrogation and three masked person tore her clothes. Senator Mushahid Hussain said that close-circuit cameras were recording our meeting therefore we could not ask her the questions we wanted to."

¶20. "Karzai's Brother Confirms Presence At Saudi Talks" "Dawn" (10/10)

"A brother of President Hamid Karzai said on Thursday his visit to Saudi Arabia last month was part of an Afghan push for the kingdom to convene peace talks with the Taliban. Qayoum Karzai, the elder brother of the Afghan president, confirmed that no representatives of the militia were present at the meeting although the Afghan

delegation had included former Taliban leaders."

¶21. "Sino-Pak N-Energy Deal Likely During Zardari's Visit" "The Nation" (10/10)

"Pakistan and china are likely to enter into a vital deal on more nuclear plants, to be set up on Pakistani soil with Chinese assistance, during President Asif Ali Zardari's visit to China. President Zardari will embark next week on his first visit to the friendly neighboring state."

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Editorials/Op-eds  
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¶22. "An Open Mind, Please," an editorial in the Karachi-based center-left independent national English daily "Dawn" (cir. 55,000) (10/10)

"While it is certainly parliament's legal prerogative to summon state officials - uniformed or otherwise - to explain their conduct, the ongoing classified briefing is a very positive sign for democracy given the history of army supremacy over Parliament.... The criticism of the content of the briefing itself was similarly misguided. The briefing given by the director general of military operations was criticized for being too focused on military operations rather than the strategic threat from the militants.... Democracy is about debate and choosing from a menu of alternatives. Everyone invited had a duty to step forward and make a case for their own strategy of defeating militancy. Rather than reflexive opposition to the government, opposition MPs have a duty to uphold democratic values and protect the people of this country."

¶23. "State Of War," an editorial in the centrist national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (10/10)

"The briefing by military leaders on the prevailing situation in the north of the country has created a 'mixed' impression. Many who now condemn the war against terrorists as one fought on behalf of the U.S. forget that the shadowy outfits that claim to speak in the name of religion, are largely the creation of Washington. U.S. interests - not religious zeal - were the prime motive behind their creation."

¶24. "In Camera' Briefing," an editorial note in the second-largest, center-right nationalist Urdu daily "Nawa-i-Waqt" (cir. 125,000) (10/10)

"The in camera briefing would be useful only if it is aimed at formulating a policy to extricate the country from fighting a war of U.S. interests, otherwise this is a futile exercise."

¶25. "We Must Back Army Against Terrorists!," an editorial in the Lahore-based liberal English language daily "Daily Times" (cir. 10,000) (10/10)

"As far as the majority in the joint session is concerned, the ruling coalition will be able to secure it once again. One good sign is that even those who oppose military operations predict that the parliament will decide in favor of fighting this war because it is Pakistan's war now and not only America's. Pakistan is in bad economic shape and needs to avoid international isolation. And the army will need more than just a majority vote. It will need a 'national consensus' and a complete backing from the free media."

¶26. "In-Camera Briefing," an editorial in the center-right national English daily "The Nation" (cir. 20,000) (10/10)

"The briefing has evoked some valuable comments from different opposition quarters. It has been called 'eyewash' devoid of any analysis about the course the authorities have adopted.... The view being expressed by some politicians, that former President Musharraf should be asked to depose before Parliament about such matters should be seriously considered. This would facilitate the formulation of a comprehensive policy to combat the menace."

¶27. "MPs Are Dissatisfied," an editorial in the Islamabad-based rightist English daily "Pakistan Observer" (cir. 5,000) (10/10)

"Parliamentarians and politicians must prove worthy of confidence being reposed in them especially in this crucial issue that pertains to the solidarity and security of the country..... It is hoped that the MPs would get clear answers so that they are able to comprehend the nature of the issue and give their input for addressing the challenge effectively."

¶28. "Members Of Parliament Must Stand Above Party Politics," an editorial in the popular rightist Urdu-language daily "Ausaf" (cir. 10,000) (10/10)

"We, as a frontline state in the U.S.-led war on terror, have lost thousands of our precious lives during the past several years. In addition to this, we put our social fabric, and national economy in danger, but the U.S. is still obliging India immensely, why? And why is the United States defying our independence and sovereignty? Why Obama and McCain are debating to harm Pakistan instead of Iran and North Korea? Time has come to renounce this vicious plan of the United States, and link our future with China, or else we will keep on incurring insurmountable losses."

¶29. "In Camera Session Of Parliament," an editorial in the Peshawar-based Urdu-language daily "Mashriq" (cir. 55,000) (10/10)

"It is essential to find out the sources and supply-line of the terrorists from where they are constantly obtaining arms, ammunition, communication gadgets, money, and tin-packed food. The enemies in the garb of friends must also be exposed, and if we have concrete evidences of connections of intelligence agencies of allied countries with the terrorist groups, we must review our ties with these countries to ensure Pakistan's national interests, territorial integrity and independence."

¶30. "In Camera Session; Blasts And Rumors," an editorial in liberal Urdu daily "Express" (cir. 25,000) (10/10)

"The present extraordinary session of the parliament must continue until the esteemed members arrive at a unanimous strategy. After this session, the members must brief their provincial counterparts and Nazims to prepare their respective constituencies to counter terrorists. The government and law enforcement agencies alone cannot control terrorism. The public also needs to be vigilant about such elements."

¶31. "Parliament's 'Secret' Session," an editorial in the center-right Urdu daily "Pakistan" (cir. 10,000) (10/10)

"Following this 'confidential' session of the parliament, it is hoped that the politicians will stop expressing reservations about military operations against terrorists, which undoubtedly take place with the government's permission. It is also hoped that the army would also work on the strategy formulated in the joint session. It must be understood that the war on terror will produce positive results only when there is complete unity and solidarity."

¶32. "Islamabad Security Lapse," an editorial in the Lahore-based liberal English daily "The Post" (cir. 5,000) (10/10)

"If these militants have gone thus far to kill innocent people, destroy property, weaken an emerging economy by not listening to even moderate Muslim leaders, all in the name of Islam, how can one even think of times when they wield a political power? Militancy must be defeated by a united nation with full vigor for its own survival."

¶33. "Downward Spiral," an editorial in the centrist national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (10/10)

"As before, many questions come to mind. How was the bomber able to bring a huge volume of explosives into Islamabad at a time when all roads leading in are so heavily secured? Does a stockpile exist somewhere within its boundaries? What is the channel for the intelligence information that militants seem able to access? The timing of their attack and the target chosen is otherwise hard to account for. These questions need to be answered. People too need to be told. There is a feeling that events are spiraling completely out of control; that the nation is plummeting in a free-fall and no parachute will open up to save it from a crash. The government and



its managers need to act quickly to some semblance of stability within the country."

¶34. "Pakistani Senators And Dr. Aafia," an editorial note in the second-largest, center-right nationalist Urdu daily "Nawa-i-Waqt" (cir. 125,000) (10/10)

"Dr. Aafia has denied all allegations against her and said that she does not expect justice from the U.S. Looking at statements by U.S. officials, one can see one lie after another. The Pakistani delegation should press for her release by contacting U.S. officials. Pakistani Ambassadors Hussain Haqqani and Hussain Haroon must also speed up their efforts for this Pakistani woman's release. The government must adopt the path of dignity rather than compromise."

¶35. "Reason For Hope In The Fight Against Military," an op-ed by Shafqat Mahmood in the centrist national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (10/10)

"What will emerge out of this exercise may not necessarily be the complete consensus the government hopes for. Already some discordant voices are being heard complaining about a lack of substance in the briefing. This is not a surprise because there are some within the Parliament sympathetic to the avowed goal of the terrorists; the formation of their version of an Islamic state. This should not faze the government. In a democracy, there never can be a complete consensus. Hopefully, what will emerge is a sizeable majority agreeing to carry forward the fight against militancy."

¶36. "Of Pakistani Bondage," an op-ed by Ayaz Amir in the centrist national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (10/10)

"This is brilliant firefighting. First set things on fire, create conditions which give rise to extremism and militancy, and then announce that extremism represents the greatest threat to national security and must be eliminated. Most Pakistanis have no taste for the Taliban brand of Islam: the Sharia, or somebody's mutilated understanding of Sharia, imposed at gunpoint. Why it then that is among ordinary Pakistanis there is not much support for the 'war on terror'? Because most Pakistanis, despite revulsion against the Kalashnikov, consider this to be America's war, and consider the Pakistani leadership and the Pakistan army as playing America's game."

¶37. "Complacency Kills," an op-ed by Ayesha Siddiqi in the Karachi-based center-left independent national English daily "Dawn" (cir. 55,000) (10/10)

"As the threat from terrorism increases, Pakistan is more divided than ever in its response to the challenge. There are many who believe that it is not Islamabad's war but Washington's, and all the terrorism that we face is a result of our partnership with the U.S.... Notwithstanding the demands of groups that desire greater upward social mobility, the lower classes are the worst off and will remain so because their fate is not going to change even if the Taliban-type manage to establish their writ. The militants use religion to gain power, not to distribute it amongst the dispossessed. In fact, if the Taliban were to become powerful they would generate a new set of the dispossessed."

¶38. "Reconciliation In Afghanistan?," an op-ed by Najmuddin A. Shaikh in the Lahore-based liberal English language daily "Daily Times" (cir. 10,000) (10/10)

"There are reports that more than 70 percent of the officer corps is drawn from the Tajiks and that recruitment in the Pashtun areas, possibly because of Taliban intimidation, remains very low. If a Tajik-dominated army comes into being, it will provide fuel for a further ethnic conflict and make even token stability more difficult to achieve."